



STATE SENATOR • LIZ BRATER • 18TH DISTRICT

Brater Press Release

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REPUBLICANS VOTE AGAINST WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION FOR REPORTING POLLUTERS

(LANSING)—An amendment to Senate Bill 568 offered by Senator Liz Brater (D-Ann Arbor) that would have strengthened the whistleblower protections for citizens who report polluters to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) was defeated today with all Republicans voting against it.

“The language in the substitute for Senate Bill 568 was unclear and would have discouraged honest citizens from reporting businesses that discharge pollutants into Michigan’s lakes and streams,” said Brater. “The bill implements an award program for reporting polluters to the DEQ, which is something I strongly support. However, the wording of the bill needed to be clarified to protect whistleblowers. This substitute suggests that unless an individual has actual proof of exactly who is dumping the pollutants, she or he cannot report it for fear of being penalized if they are wrong. This is a huge disincentive for the average citizen who wants to protect our environment.”

Senate Bill 568 states that any person who “knowingly provides false information” can be penalized by the DEQ. Brater’s amendment clarifies this by adding that only the person who provides such information in an “effort to obtain a monetary award” should be penalized.

“When someone sees pollutants flowing into a waterway from a pipe in the ground they can’t always tell exactly which building or company it’s coming from,” explained Brater. “Penalizing someone for reporting a polluter because they didn’t have the technical expertise to identify which of the five businesses on the river was dumping the waste will discourage anyone from reporting pollution problems. This is tantamount to penalizing a citizen who reports a hit and run accident to the police but gets the color of the car wrong. Who will ever offer to help if they are threatened with reprisal if they are wrong?”

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